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United Nations International Civilian Support Mission in Haiti

Report of the Secretary-General

I. Introduction

1. The present report is submitted pursuant to General Assembly resolution 54/193 of 17 December 1999, in which the General Assembly established the International Civilian Support Mission in Haiti (MICAH) in order to consolidate the results achieved by the Organization of American States (OAS)/United Nations International Civilian Mission in Haiti (MICIVIH), the United Nations Civilian Police Mission in Haiti (MIPONUH) and previous United Nations missions. In paragraph 12 of the same resolution, the General Assembly requested me to submit a report to the General Assembly every four months. The present report covers developments in the mission area since the submission of my previous report to the Assembly, on 17 July 2000 (A/55/154).

II. Political situation and elections

2. Since mid-July, Haiti's political and electoral crisis has deepened, polarizing its political class and civil society, jeopardizing its international relations, sapping an already declining economy and adding to the hardship of the impoverished majority.

3. Disregarding all calls for rectification of the method of calculation of the Senate results and certain other irregularities in the 21 May legislative and municipal elections, and with the opposition maintaining its boycott, the authorities completed the drawn-out electoral process, promulgated the final results and seated a new Parliament. The ruling Fanmi Lavalas party of former President Aristide took 18 of the 19 contested Senate seats and 72 of the 83 seats in the Chamber of Deputies. Without consulting the opposition, President Préval named three new members to the Provisional Electoral Council (CEP) to replace its President, who had fled the country in June, and two opposition representatives who had previously resigned. He then empowered the contested CEP to organize elections for president and the remaining one third of the Senate seats on 26 November.

4. Most of the opposition, grouped in a tactical alliance, first known as the Groupe de convergence and currently as the Democratic Convergence, adhered throughout most of this period to the position that the 21 May elections were so fraudulent that they should be annulled and held again under a new CEP, but only after President Préval had stood down and been replaced by a provisional government. In the meantime, the opposition ruled out any participation in the November elections. This position was promoted through the media and in a series of rallies in provincial towns, of which the largest drew a crowd of

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5,000. The campaign failed in every way to deter the Government and Fanmi Lavalas.

5. While not backing the opposition call for the complete annulment of the elections, civil society organizations — private sector groups, churches, labour unions, intellectuals — all urged the authorities to address the serious electoral irregularities in order to avoid exacerbating the political crisis and jeopardizing much-needed international assistance. Groups of intellectuals, including some who had once supported former President Aristide's Lavalas movement, issued a series of petitions voicing concern about the perceived totalitarian tendencies of Fanmi Lavalas and the possible emergence of a one-party state. For the most part, Fanmi Lavalas dismissed these civil society organizations as representing only the elite of Haitian society and as being disconnected from the overwhelming majority of the people.

6. The international community always held that the errors of the 21 May elections could be rectified, although its appeals to this end at every stage in the process had no effect. Its chief concern was the flawed method of calculating the Senate results, in which all of the front-runners won outright in the first round, regardless of whether they had the absolute majority required by the electoral law or just a plurality. According to the OAS Electoral Observation Mission, there should have been run-offs for 10 of the 19 Senate seats. Concern was also voiced about the significant, unexplained differences between the final figures of CEP and those previously posted by the regional electoral offices, and the failure of CEP to deal with the complaints filed by candidates challenging voting procedures and results.

7. After the mission led by OAS Secretary-General César Gaviria in mid-August and several visits by envoys of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) and the United States of America had failed to stop the seating of the new Parliament on 28 August, Haiti's main bilateral donors announced the end of "business as usual". They would not finance the November elections or any electoral observer missions, they would not recognize the new Parliament, and they would henceforth provide little or no assistance to the Government of Haiti, channelling it all through non-governmental organizations. The United States Administration also stated that it would consider opposing Haitian loan requests from international financial institutions. All this was to stay in effect until an independent and credible CEP was established; there was some accommodation on the 21 May elections, especially the contested Senate seats; and a dialogue was started with the opposition on ways to strengthen Haitian democracy. Meanwhile, the European Union, which had already suspended some projects in July, took steps to invoke a provision of the Lomé Convention which could lead to the suspension of its assistance.

8. At a ministerial-level meeting held in New York on 13 September, the Group of Friends of the Secretary-General for Haiti (Argentina, Canada, Chile, France, the United States of America and Venezuela) voiced profound disappointment and deep concern at the failure of the Haitian authorities to rectify the flaws of the 21 May elections. At the Government's invitation, OAS Assistant Secretary-General Luigi Einaudi led a new mission to Haiti one week later, with the aim of facilitating a dialogue between Fanmi Lavalas and the opposition. President Préval pledged to implement any accord resulting from the dialogue, provided it "did not violate the Constitution" or delay the handover to a new President on 7 February 2001. Fanmi Lavalas was ready to take part in the dialogue although it reiterated that it was not prepared to consider any revision of the 21 May election results. The Democratic Convergence, for its part, published a set of conditions for its participation in the dialogue which included the suspension of the activities of all parliamentarians, mayors and local officials elected in May, the cessation of the activities of CEP and its replacement, and an end to all repression and acts of intimidation against the opposition.

9. In the event, no face-to-face dialogue took place, and Mr. Einaudi instead spent a week of shuttle diplomacy between the two sides. OAS made a third attempt at mediation, from 13 to 21 October, and was successful in convening direct talks witnessed by some representatives of the international community. While there was an exchange of position papers and some progress made, the talks ultimately failed to produce an agreement that could serve as a foundation for proceeding with presidential and senatorial elections that would include candidates from across the political spectrum. Based on his bilateral consultations, Mr. Einaudi prepared a six-point document that contained elements for a national accord, covering public security in the electoral context, issues outstanding from the 21 May 2000 elections, the

elections planned for 26 November 2000, restructuring of the electoral council, strengthening democracy, and the role of the international community. For his part, Mr. Aristide, citing security concerns, agreed to meet with the Democratic Convergence only if its leaders came to his home.

10. On 23 October, Mr. Einaudi reported to the Permanent Council of OAS that appreciable progress had been made towards breaking the logjam but that very substantial differences persisted, primarily concerning the contentious 21 May elections. On that occasion, CARICOM indicated its intention to field observers for the presidential elections.

11. Late in September, the Department of Political Affairs dispatched an electoral expert to consider United Nations electoral assistance in the light of the current political stand-off. The expert consulted with the international community, including donors, the Government and opposition, and sought to assess the technical capacity of CEP to stage free and fair elections. The mission coincided with a round of OAS mediation, providing an opportunity for consultation with representatives of OAS which has been extensively involved in the Haitian elections. After meeting with a wide range of actors, the expert found that, assuming the necessary political will, the Council's preparedness was adequate. The United Nations, meanwhile, decided that, in the present circumstances, it was not in a position to continue its technical assistance to CEP in its preparations for the November elections. As a result, the United Nations technical assistance team — deployed under the auspices of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) — left the country on 15 October.

12. The deepening political crisis and the continued suspension of much financial assistance by international financial institutions precipitated a fall in the Haitian gourde, from 18 to the United States dollar in May to around 25 at present. This has provoked a surge in the price of basic commodities in a country in which the majority lives in great poverty. An additional spur to inflation came from a 44 per cent hike in the price of fuel, which the Government was obliged to introduce on 2 September because of the increase in world oil prices. This has already prompted a one-day general strike backed by the opposition and a three-day closure of petrol stations, and is expected to lead to further protests. The constraints on Government spending — exacerbated by the need to finance the November elections from its own resources — have given rise to unrest in the public sector. In the meantime, the expectations of the so-called popular organizations that they would be rewarded with jobs for supporting Fanmi Lavalas (by means of the violent street demonstrations held during the electoral period) have emerged as an additional source of pressure on the Government and Fanmi Lavalas.

13. Since July, there has been an increase in violent crime that may be linked to the worsening political and social situation. The victims of fatal shootings include a MICAH staff member who was shot while behind the wheel of a clearly marked United Nations vehicle near the head office of MICAH on 7 August. Another MICAH international staff member in a marked United Nations vehicle was the target of an attempted car hijacking by two gunmen near a well-known hotel in September. There have been worrying allegations of police involvement in robbery, extortion and abduction, as well as drug trafficking, together with reports of anarchic tax collection by newly elected local officials, and the involvement of popular organizations in protection rackets.

14. Political pressures on the Haitian National Police (HNP), together with such incidents as the attempted lynching of a police commissioner during a pro-Aristide demonstration on 2 October, have contributed to the demoralization of HNP and eroded its operational capacity and credibility. Reports that its effective strength has fallen to alarmingly low levels have fuelled fears of a breakdown in public order.

15. These fears were exacerbated on 18 October when the Government alleged that several ranking local police chiefs (commissaires) were plotting to seize state power. As a result, two agents were arrested, seven fled the country and have applied for political asylum in the Dominican Republic, and two others have sought the protection of the Dominican embassy in Port-au-Prince. Some of those implicated have stated publicly that the coup plot was fabricated by Fanmi Lavalas members who wish to assume control of HNP. They mentioned specifically Senator Danny Toussaint, President of the Senate's Permanent Commission for Justice and Public Security, who issued a report on 12 September alleging the presence of criminals within HNP and proposing that it be purged. They also claim that Fanmi Lavalas interfered inappropriately in security matters related to the May election and was involved in illegal acts.

16. A degree of hostility towards the international community was sustained by talk in the media of international sanctions, and statements by the President and Prime Minister in July. They called upon Haitians to tighten their belts, likening the situation to 1804 when Haiti won its independence on the battlefield. Intermittent street demonstrations, for the most part non-violent, continued outside embassies and offices of the United Nations and OAS, albeit with less frequency than in June and early July. On 27 July, a grenade was thrown at the Canadian Ambassador's residence and, on 11 August, a Molotov cocktail was tossed at the home of a European Union official. No one was hurt in either incident and damage was considered minimal. Unexploded grenades were also found at the building that used to house MICIVIH and at a French-run private school. Requests for increased police protection by the international community in Haiti for the most part did not result in any significant measures.

III. Deployment and operations of the International Civilian Support Mission in Haiti

17. It is recalled that the recruitment of substantive staff of MICAH was delayed because of financing problems and that the first advisers did not begin to arrive in Haiti until mid-June 2000. Thereafter, staff were progressively recruited and deployed and, by mid-October, the three pillars of MICAH — justice, police and human rights — had a total of 68 advisers assigned to the Ministry of Justice, HNP, the Prison Authority, the Judges School and the Office of the Ombudsman, as well as to MICAH regional offices, a human rights verification unit and units working with civil society partners.

18. MICAH worked with UNDP and bilateral donors involved in the areas of justice, police and human rights to identify short-term projects that would best be undertaken by the Mission. When issues concerned more than one of the MICAH pillars, joint approaches were made to the authorities. MICAH took part in a discussion with all the United Nations agencies on the common country assessment conducted throughout June 2000, and on the methodology and joint initiatives being undertaken to prepare the United Nations Development Assistance Framework for the period 2002-2006.

IV. Justice

19. The justice pillar of MICAH, which had 17 advisers by mid-October, provided logistical and organizational support for a process of discussion and revision of five newly prepared draft laws, three concerning the organization and independence of the judiciary, one concerning drug trafficking and one concerning money-laundering. The process began with discussions with judicial officials and lawyers in each of Haiti's five appellate courts. It was followed by a five-day national forum at the Judges School, organized jointly by the Ministry of Justice and the MICAH justice pillar, which brought together all of the actors in the justice sector to discuss the five draft laws, with the participation of three United Nations international experts.

20. There were two trials held during this period that were landmarks in the fight against impunity and in efforts to improve due process during criminal trials. One was the three-week trial of a group of police officers accused of 11 executions in 1999 in the Port-au-Prince district, Carrefour-Feuilles. The other was the trial of 22 former army officers, soldiers and civilians accused in a 1994 massacre in the Gonaïves district of Raboteau, which began on 29 September. MICAH monitored the Raboteau trial and provided technical assistance to those planning security. UNDP also facilitated the testimony at trial of five military experts and legal anthropologists.

21. Building on the work of UNDP, the justice pillar helped to reorganize the Prison Authority and began a programme of training in prison and personnel management for the Prison Authority's trainers and wardens. Together with UNDP and the International Committee of the Red Cross, it supported the Prison Authority's attempts to address problems in prison conditions, including inadequate food, medical treatment, sanitary conditions and recreation time outside cells. MICAH voiced its concern to the authorities about the continued detention, without legal basis, of nearly 300 deportees in the National Penitentiary and in Port-au-Prince police stations after their repatriation from the United States upon completion of prison sentences. The authorities, who reluctantly resumed accepting deportees in June, acknowledged that such detentions were not legal but maintained that public security concerns and the lack of facilities for social rehabilitation and reintegration

prevented their immediate release. A female deportee died in hospital in September after falling ill in police custody.

22. The justice pillar also gave juridical and technical support to non-governmental organizations providing legal aid for the poor, and took on the publishing of a French-Creole lexicon of legal terms, together with the Ministry of Justice, the State University of Haiti, the Port-au-Prince Bar and the jurists' association. Advisers were also assigned to provincial courts to help speed up the processing of detainees, assist with judicial control over the police, and improve the work of court and prison clerks.

V. Haitian National Police

23. The police section of MICAH had 24 advisers by mid-October, assigned to the directorates and central offices of HNP in Port-au-Prince — including the General Directorate, the Inspectorate General, the Administrative Police, the Judicial Police Directorate, the Bureau for Criminal Affairs and the Centre for Information and Operations — and the nine Police departmental directors.

24. The equipment and materiel necessary for the police to operate were found to be in extremely short supply in most units. Some police officers of all ranks were reported to be demoralized and unmotivated. In addition to the tough conditions and shortage of equipment, the reasons for demoralization included the negative impact of instances of corruption and drug trafficking, accompanied by attempts by a faction of Fanmi Lavalas to gain control of the force. After the installation of the new Parliament, several Fanmi Lavalas senators embarked on a campaign of almost daily criticism of the police, accusing the service of incompetence and inactivity in the face of soaring crime and of having corrupted elements within its ranks. Expectations that many police officers would be replaced after the change of Government contributed to a wait-and-see attitude, in particular in view of the arrest of several high-ranking officers on suspicion of plotting a coup d'état, a charge for which there was seemingly little evidence.

25. During this period, the police section organized a one-day seminar which brought all of its advisers together with 26 senior HNP officials and representatives of bilateral and multilateral donors working in the police and justice areas. The Director General of HNP also attended the seminar, which was aimed at explaining the nature of MICAH technical assistance to the police and encouraging receptivity, as well as providing a forum for a free exchange of ideas. A nationwide police recruitment drive was launched on 2 October with the support of MICAH.

VI. Human rights

26. The human rights section of MICAH had 27 advisers by the start of October, with teams deployed to Cap Haïtien, Gonaïves and Les Cayes as well as Port-au-Prince. Advisers began assignments at the Office of the Ombudsman (Office de la Protection du Citoyen) and at the Inspectorate General of the Police. A four-day training programme was developed for human rights instructors at the Police Academy, in order to reinforce their knowledge of human rights issues, Haitian law and good police practice. A team also initiated human rights training for new prison guard recruits with the eventual aim of training trainers at the Prison Authority to take over the module.

27. International Peace Day (19 September) was used as a vehicle to promote the values of a culture of peace through the media, round-table meetings and other activities organized jointly with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). MICAH planned other events in the context of the International Year for the Culture of Peace, including supporting a nationwide writing competition for young people organized by radio journalists. A seminar on the complaints mechanism of the Inter-American Commission of Human Rights was held with members of the Commission in August for Haitian human rights organizations.

28. Although on a lesser scale than its MICIVIH predecessor, the human rights section began carrying out verification activities, following up primarily incidents of violence which could be of a political nature and a number of allegations of serious abuse. Incidents of violence linked to the 21 May electoral process subsided as the process slowly concluded. There were, however, sporadic reports of groups of sometimes heavily armed men accompanying Fanmi Lavalas officials and acting in an intimidatory fashion. Likewise, the continued failure to punish individuals linked to certain pro-Fanmi Lavalas organizations allegedly responsible for violent and threatening

behaviour compounded the perception that institutions responsible for guaranteeing law and order and protecting human rights were increasingly subordinated to the dominant power group. Following the installation of the new municipal councils, security agents attached to town halls assumed policing functions, posing a threat to the protection of human rights, given the lack of controls or a legal framework for their activity.

29. Respect of the rights to individual liberty and a fair trial within a reasonable time limit continued to be the most frequent human rights violations, in particular in Port-au-Prince where there are detainees held since 1995 and 1996 without trial, some of them with release orders. Political considerations would still appear to dominate in some cases. Poor record-keeping in both prisons and courts compounded the difficulties of tracking cases and facilitated such violations. These problems were referred to the MICAH justice section for follow-up through its technical support at the Prison Authority and in certain jurisdictions. Local police authorities in Port-au-Prince began taking action in response to concerns expressed about prolonged detention in police custody and sharply deteriorated conditions which were jeopardizing the health of detainees. The human rights section also monitored the Carrefour-Feuilles trial of six police officers, four of whom were convicted of murder.

VII. Development activities

30. Representatives of the United Nations system in Haiti have continued their efforts to implement the reform programme of the Secretary-General. After almost one year of dialogue, consensus-building and formulation involving all key development partners, and following a thorough validation process, the common country assessment document was finalized and officially released on United Nations Day. Building on the consensus that emerged from the assessment, and in line with Economic and Social Council resolution 1999/11 of 27 July 1999, in which the Council called for the development of a long-term strategy and programme of support for Haiti, the United Nations system is engaged in the formulation of a United Nations Development Assistance Framework for Haiti, which is expected to be finalized in January 2001. To launch the process, two workshops were organized for all United Nations agencies, with the participation of representatives of the United Nations Development Group Office at UNDP. Three broad, transversal themes were adopted in the preparation of the Framework: (a) education for all, enhancement of human resources and access to social services; (b) governance and rule of law; and (c) food security and rural development.

31. Pursuant to an earlier agreement among the Government, the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) on the preparation of an interim poverty reduction strategy paper, the Government formulated a preparatory document describing the underlying strategy. Meanwhile, an IMF mission visited Haiti in order to evaluate the status of the budget deficit and public finances and to devise a strategy to restore equilibrium to the budgetary accounts and control inflation.

32. In addition to the United Nations country team's intense mobilization around the assessment and Framework processes, agencies have continued to develop and implement their own programmes within their mandated areas. UNDP launched its justice programme, after in-depth discussions held with the Ministry of Justice and MICAH. The programme is aimed at (a) reinforcing the leadership of the Ministry of Justice and its capacity to formulate a policy for the justice sector; and (b) promoting the participation of other actors, including civil society, in the debate on judicial reform. In the context of the employment programme of UNDP and the International Labour Organization, a presentation was made to introduce the broad lines of the national employment promotion policy. UNDP also supported the preparation of the first national plan for risk and disaster prevention and management.

33. In cooperation with relevant national and local authorities, the World Food Programme (WFP) provided special assistance to stabilize the food security situation in the drought-stricken north and north-eastern regions. WFP also undertook an inter-ministerial review of its programme in Haiti. In addition to its regular activities, the World Health Organization provided continuous support for vaccination campaigns against measles, together with the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), and mobilized special resources to combat infant mortality. UNICEF also finalized its cooperation strategy with the Government for its next country programme and supported the Government in finalizing the national

report on the follow-up to the World Summit for Children. The Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) continued its public information campaign in 10 major cities, entitled "Artists and youth caravan against AIDS". In collaboration with UNICEF and UNESCO, the United Nations Population Fund supported a youth national congress. It also launched a project on HIV/AIDS prevention and provided support to the Haitian delegation attending the five-year follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women. The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations supported a series of activities for World Food Day and aided in the preparation of an agricultural policy document and action plans for the fisheries and aquaculture sectors. The International Organization for Migration organized a series of workshops on migration issues and provided support for the drafting of a migration law. The United Nations disaster management team reacted swiftly to Hurricane Debby, facilitating several coordination meetings with all concerned actors so that preparatory measures were taken

VIII. Observations

34. The political polarization of Haiti was highlighted by the Inter-American Commission of Human Rights, which visited Port-au-Prince from 21 to 25 August. In a statement issued at the end of the visit, the Commission stated that the most critical and worrying aspect of the current human rights situation in Haiti was the deterioration of the political climate to such a point that no consensus seemed to exist about the ways in which to consolidate the country's fledgling democracy. In his most recent report, the independent expert of the Commission on Human Rights on the situation of human rights in Haiti pointed out that Haiti suffered from an enormous lack of a culture of democracy, which must be reduced if democracy were truly to be strengthened and political stability ensured in that country, which seemed to have gone from one crisis to another since the restoration of democracy (A/55/335, para. 29).

35. A disturbing element of this polarization is the widely held perception among opponents of Fanmi Lavalas — shared by many former supporters — that the party might establish a dictatorial and repressive regime if, as is widely expected, Mr. Aristide once again assumes the presidency. On the other hand, it is very evident that Mr. Aristide enjoys the loyalty of broad sectors of the urban and rural poor. The disinclination of the parties to work towards a compromise is a fundamental cause of the polarization.

36. The negative perception of Mr. Aristide's party seems to be a factor in the opposition's reluctance to enter into a dialogue. Many in the opposition seem to hope that, under the pressure of international isolation and internal unrest, Fanmi Lavalas will somehow disintegrate and that compromise is therefore unnecessary. The consequences of this attitude can be seen in Haiti's political stalemate, soon to enter its fourth year. Its costs can be witnessed in the increasingly desperate situation of the country's poor, unprotected from the impact of external factors, such as rising oil prices and some aspects of globalization.

37. In my previous report, I stressed the fact that Haitian authorities had flouted the views of OAS, the International Organization of la Francophonie, CARICOM, bilateral partners, domestic electoral monitors and other civil society groupings, as well as the United Nations, in particular the concern of members of the Security Council. In refusing to recalculate the erroneous Senate results, some Haitian leaders have violated basic norms of democratic governance and fair play. In recent weeks, as opportunity after opportunity to reach common ground has been missed, there have been suggestions by critics that these leaders are further isolating Haiti, and ensuring it pariah status. This isolation is apt to grow, as a Parliament has been seated whose legitimacy is in doubt, rendering unlikely the early resumption of international assistance.

38. A further indication of the deteriorating political situation is the charge that high-ranking officers within HNP were plotting a coup d'état, although evidence has not been presented. Already demoralized by poor working conditions and a climate of impunity, HNP is increasingly the target of those who would use the force for their own political ends. It bears recalling that public security is central to the lives of all citizens and that an independent police force, which respects the rights of citizens, is indispensable to any democratic society.

39. It was with considerable reluctance that the United Nations withdrew the team of experts which was providing technical assistance to CEP, after supporting for several years Haiti's efforts to ensure

conditions adequate to the free exercise of the franchise. This most recent technical assistance project began nearly one year ago, and was expected to last through the presidential elections scheduled for the end of 2000. It aimed also to train a new Permanent Electoral Council, which will be charged with organizing elections over the next decade. After intensive examination of Haiti's current electoral council and its practice, it was decided that requisite standards had not been met, necessitating the withdrawal of United Nations support.

40. While denying the Government direct international assistance, so as to send a political message, Haiti's bilateral donors hope to avoid hurting the Haitian population by channelling aid through non-governmental organizations. However, directly or indirectly, the Haitian economy and population will inevitably suffer. The swings of international assistance from government to non-governmental organizations and back, according to the legitimacy of the government of the day, have disrupted long-term development in the past. Assistance provided through non-governmental organizations may partially alleviate hardship but the Government is a necessary partner for poverty reduction and health programmes. Likewise, the kinds of programmes needed to revive development — such as infrastructural projects and schemes to reinforce the police and overhaul the judicial system — require strong, governmental measures. Furthermore, the failure of the Haitian authorities to address the concerns of the political parties and the international community has so far prevented Haiti from regaining access to the international financial assistance that has been suspended for the past three years. These factors, and the overall political crisis, have been largely responsible for the fall in the gourde, which has hit the poor hard by triggering a rapid rise in the price of foodstuffs and other basic commodities.

41. In the absence of any solution to the crisis, popular discontent seems likely to mount in response to the rising prices and increasing poverty, and may lead to further turmoil. A combination of rampant crime, violent street protests and incidents of violence targeted at the international community could severely limit the ability of MICAH to fulfil its mandate. Its capacity to function effectively has already been adversely affected by the withdrawal or reduction of once-important bilateral programmes of assistance in the areas of justice and public security. At bottom, MICAH support is contingent upon legitimate counterparts who enjoy the esteem of the Haitian people and that of the international community.

42. In this climate of political turmoil and instability, and with national counterparts often lacking or distracted by political concerns, it will be necessary to devise new forms of technical assistance that might better allow the United Nations system to continue supporting the Haitian people. It is my view, therefore, in the light of the conditions in Haiti, that a renewal of the mandate of MICAH is not advisable, and it is with regret that I recommend that the Mission be terminated when its mandate draws to an end on 6 February 2001. In preparation, discussions have already commenced among UNDP, MICAH and the Friends of the Secretary-General for Haiti, in consultation with other members of the United Nations system, with the aim of designing a programme of assistance to the Haitian people that is commensurate with the country's political realities and absorption capacity.

43. Overall, it is imperative that the country's political leaders and civil society engage in a constructive dialogue so as to address the needs of one of the most impoverished populations in the world and create an enabling environment for international financial and developmental assistance. I hardly need emphasize that a well-functioning, multi-party system is essential to democratic governance. Political turmoil has produced plummeting economic indicators, which in turn has led to a deteriorating security situation. Firm action to stop this downward spiral is long overdue. It should be emphasized that, in the absence of such steps, the misery of Haiti's long-suffering poor majority will only be exacerbated.

44. The Friends of the Secretary-General for Haiti deserve gratitude for their advice and cooperation, which have been a key element throughout United Nations activities in Haiti. I shall count on their counsel in the future. I am grateful to the Member States which have contributed to the Trust Fund for MICAH — Canada, Norway and the United States of America. I would like to commend the efforts of my representative, Alfredo Lopes Cabral and all MICAH personnel, for their work in difficult and challenging circumstances.